

Revising with Style

LESSON 2

Saying More with Less

When you revise your writing, look for ways to say more with less. By shortening wordy phrases, you can make your sentences more effective and your writing more concise. Notice the difference between the first sentence below and the two that follow.

Wordy I wore a coat **for the reason that** I was cold.

Concise I wore a coat **because** I was cold.

Concise I wore a coat **since** I was cold.

The phrase *for the reason that* may be familiar to the ear, but the words *because* and *since* work just as well—and in a shorter space. Compare the two columns below and notice how some common but wordy phrases can be sensibly shortened.

Wordy	Concise
as to whether	whether
due to the fact that	because or since
during the period that	when
he is someone who	he
in a quick manner	quickly
prior to	before
regardless of the fact that	although or even though
subsequent to	after
with regard to	about

You may be tempted to use wordy phrases like the ones shown above when writing formal school reports or business letters. While these phrases may lend a more formal tone, they may also make your writing sound unnatural or inauthentic. Strive to find your own writing voice—without using wordy phrases like these.

EXERCISE Rewrite each of the following sentences, replacing wordy phrases with shorter, more concise terms.

Sample What do you know concerning the matter of Mary H. Kingsley?

Revision What do you know about Mary H. Kingsley?

1. Born in England in 1862, Kingsley was a person who spent much of her youth caring for her sickly mother and brother.

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2. Her father expected her to take care of them owing to the fact that he traveled a great deal.

3. In the little free time she had, however, she would read stories that explorers had written in reference to their adventures in Africa.

4. Subsequent to her parents' death, Kingsley decided to change her life.

5. At the time that she was thirty, she made her first trip to West Africa.

6. Although she was uncertain as to whether she could manage on her own, her trip was a success.

7. Kingsley was someone who felt more at home in West Africa than in England.

8. She lived for a year with the Fang tribe, who accepted her due to the fact that she brought cloth and tobacco to trade for their ivory and rubber.

9. Regardless of the fact that she had no formal education, Kingsley made many scientific discoveries during her trips to West Africa.

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- 10.** Prior to returning to England in 1895, she collected many new and rare species of beetle and fish and made careful ethnological studies of tribal culture.

- 11.** Her travels along the Ogowé River and through jungle to the Rembwé River were all the more remarkable considering the fact that the region had never been mapped.

- 12.** Prior to her, nobody had climbed the northeast face of Mount Cameroon, an ascent of 13,350 feet.

- 13.** When Kingsley fell through a camouflaged animal trap onto twelve-inch spikes, she handled the crisis in a brave manner.

- 14.** The books she wrote with regard to her travels were immediate bestsellers.

- 15.** More than a century following the time that her first book was published, Kingsley continues to be admired by thousands of readers.
